Considerations Before Implementing MobileCirc for a Deselection Project

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Abstract

In Fall 2014, Steen Library Administration developed a renovation project to repurpose an area for students to use, particularly graduate students. The northwest quadrant of the third floor in the library cleared for the project with materials deselected or shifted. Librarians estimated that about 105,000 volumes (15% of the stacks collection) could be deselected. Deselection is a routine task performed by libraries to create a more relevant and accessible collection for the users they serve. Library faculty use various criteria for each discipline and carefully consider each item.

To meet the deadline of September 1, 2015, an efficient method, tool, or workflow was needed. A product called "MobileCirc," was an app that was marketed to allow library staffers to carry with them a streamlined set of circulation, inventory, and shelving features.

Background and Purpose

As of September 1, 2014, Steen Library had a little more than 690,000 physical volumes that was the target of the weeding project. This included all of the stacks areas spread over the 3rd & 4th floors of the library. Other collections in the library such as the East Texas Research Center, government documents, microforms, and audiovisual materials were not to be included in the project.

Library staff investigated MobileCirc as a possible solution for speeding up and economizing the process of the proposed large deselection project. Accuracy, efficiency and ease of use were other advantages sought in implementing MobileCirc.

Methods—Early Testing

Representative staff from the following areas were involved with testing MobileCirc before full implementation:

- Cataloging
- Circulation
- Web Services
- Collection Development
- Weeding Project Committee

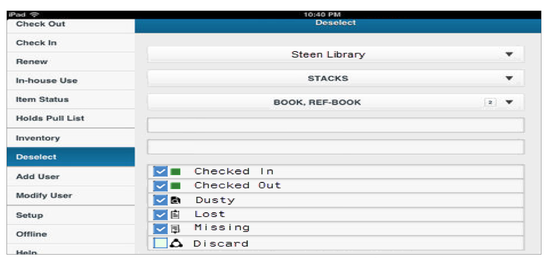
IPad Camera

The test consisted of:

- 25 sample books “scanned” into MobileCirc, checking them out to the “DISCARD” user
- available iPads used to “scan” the barcodes into MobileCirc

MobileCirc appeared to offer the most promise for infusing efficiency and speed into the process. MobileCirc:

- is a SirsiDynix product so it can work with the rest of the integrated library system (ILS),
- was not an expensive option,
- is marketed as a means of improving processes such as weeding,
- promised to allow the project to be carried out in the stacks,
- would facilitate routine deselection after the big weeding project.



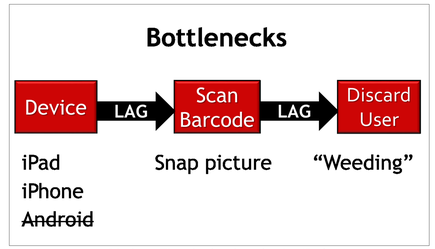
Display 2: Typical IPad MobileCirc Form for Discard

Results

Immediately problems occurred:

- There was a significant ‘lag’ between the time the barcode picture was taken and the time the barcode appeared in the record.
- Transactions eventually froze both MobileCirc and Symphony, the Library’s integrated library system.
- An alternative attempt to use an Android phone failed completely.

The reason for the transactions freezing was that the “DISCARD” user already had 5,000 users. It was resolved by creating a new user called “WEEDING”.

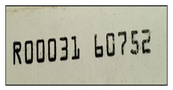


Display 3: Time-lag bottleneck using iPads

Results (cont’d)

The iPad camera was inadequate:

- The ipad camera was difficult to maneuver.
- The ipad camera could not correctly decipher OCR labels. Unfortunately it was estimated that as much as three-fourths of the collection was tagged with OCR labels rather than with barcodes. OCR labels would further slow the process since they would all have to be entered manually.



Sample OCR label

Sample of bar code

Conclusion

The attempt to use MobileCirc to facilitate a large deselection or weeding project in Steen Library was unsuccessful. Steen Library staff must continue to look for and adopt efficiencies and economies whenever possible when engaging in processes on behalf of SFA and its students. This product trial does not mitigate the need for continued exploration of solutions to ensure the most value for the education dollar. When one expectation fails, it allows for creation of other methods to create and “out-of-the-box” thinking can happen. This case also proves that testing and involving as many stakeholders as possible are always a good idea during the exploration process.